

more than SUNDAY

Part 4: Staying Faithful
Scripture: Mark 1:29-39
March 22, 2026

Group Discussion Questions

1. The message emphasized that many spiritual failures are preceded by **prayerlessness**. Looking back at your own life, have there been seasons where you felt distant from God? What role did prayer (or lack of prayer) play during those times?
2. In Mark 1:35 we see Jesus intentionally getting up early and going to a solitary place to pray. What does this example teach us about making prayer a **priority**, even when life is busy?
3. The sermon pointed out that prayer is meant to be **personal, not transactional**. When you think about your own prayers, do they tend to feel more like a relationship with God or more like a list of requests? Why do you think that is?
4. The message described God as **Father, friend, helper, and counselor**. Which of these descriptions of God resonates most with you right now, and how might that shape the way you pray?
5. Busyness and distractions were mentioned as major obstacles to prayer. What are the biggest distractions that keep you from spending time with God? What practical steps could you take this week to minimize them?
6. Prayer was described as a **spiritual discipline or habit** that takes practice. What habits have helped you stay consistent in other areas of life, and how could those same principles help you grow in your prayer life?
7. The sermon mentioned that prayer is part of a **spiritual battle** (Ephesians 6). How does recognizing that spiritual warfare is real change the way you think about prayer?
8. Jesus' prayers were connected to His **mission and purpose**. What are some specific areas of your life (family, work, relationships, decisions) where you need God's guidance and strength right now?
9. The ACTS prayer framework (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) was introduced as a helpful guide. Which part of ACTS comes most naturally to you, and which part do you tend to overlook?
10. One practical suggestion was to **pray Scripture** by turning Bible verses into personal prayers. What is one verse or promise from Scripture that you could begin praying regularly in your own life this week?

More than Sunday: Part 4

How Do I Stay Faithful?

Learning the Power of Prayer from Mark 1:35–38

One of the most discouraging things in the Christian world is seeing respected leaders fall into serious sin—whether adultery, addiction, or abuse. When these stories appear in the headlines, they often seem sudden and shocking. But when the details emerge, the fall is rarely sudden. More often, it is gradual.

Many observers of these situations have noticed a common thread: **prayerlessness**.

Author Bobby Scott, in an article titled “Prayerlessness Comes Before a Fall,” reflects on the many public failures of once-respected pastors and Christian leaders. He notes that beneath the surface of many of these tragic stories lies a consistent pattern—neglecting time with God in prayer.

In another article discussing moral failures among pastors, a number of confessions were summarized from leaders who had fallen. Among them were statements such as:

- “I never thought it would happen to me.”
- “I put myself in a dumb situation.”
- “I had no idea how much it would cost me.”

But one confession stood out above the rest:

“I wasn’t faithful in my Bible reading and prayer.”

Some of these pastors admitted that they once had consistent devotional lives but drifted away over time. Others acknowledged they had never developed a regular habit of spending time with God.

Most believers will never experience a public collapse like some of these leaders. However, many Christians can look back at seasons of struggle—times of drifting, spiritual dryness, or distance from God. When we examine those seasons honestly, we often discover the same pattern: **weak or absent prayer**.

Faith Beyond Sunday

We’re in a series titled “More Than Sunday,” which focuses on living out faith throughout the week—not just during church on Sunday morning.

The key question for this message is simple but profound:

How do I stay faithful in following Jesus?

One of the most important answers is **prayer**.

If we want a faith that lasts Monday through Saturday, our lives must be marked by a regular connection with God. To remain faithful, **we must cultivate a prayerful life rather than a prayerless one.**

To understand what that looks like, we turn to the example of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

The Example of Jesus (Mark 1:29–38)

In Mark 1:29–38, we are given a glimpse into a very busy moment in the ministry of Jesus.

After leaving the synagogue where He had been teaching, Jesus went to the home of Simon Peter and Andrew. Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, and Jesus healed her. That evening, word spread quickly throughout the town. People brought the sick and demon-possessed to Him, and the entire town gathered at the door.

Jesus healed many diseases and drove out demons. It was an intense, demanding day of ministry.

Then something remarkable happens.

Early the next morning—while it was still dark—Jesus got up, left the house, and went to a solitary place to pray. While others were looking for Him, He was intentionally seeking time alone with the Father.

From this moment in the life of Jesus, we learn three powerful lessons about prayer.

1. Prayer Is Personal, Not Transactional

Prayer is meant to be **relational**, not merely transactional.

Many people approach prayer as a list of requests: “God, help me with this,” or “God, fix that.” While bringing requests to God is certainly part of prayer, it is not the heart of prayer.

At its core, prayer is about **relationship**.

Throughout the Gospels we see that Jesus didn't pray simply to accomplish ministry tasks. Instead, He spent time enjoying communion with His Father. Prayer was not just about results—it was about relationship.

One pastor once made a striking observation: *Jesus died on the cross so that we could pray.*

That statement can be surprising. When we think about the cross, we think about forgiveness of sins and salvation—and rightly so. But the cross also restored our relationship with God. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are no longer enemies of God but sons and daughters.

Through Christ, we now have the freedom to approach God as Father and friend.

Many Christians say, "Christianity isn't a religion—it's a relationship." Yet if that relationship is real, it should be expressed through conversation with God.

For many believers, a deeper understanding of who God is can transform their prayer life. We rightly approach God with reverence and awe because He is holy and almighty. But Scripture also describes Him as:

- Our friend
- Our helper
- Our counselor and comforter
- Our Heavenly Father

For some people, viewing God as a loving Father can be challenging because of painful human relationships. Yet as we grow in our understanding of God's character—His love, compassion, and kindness—we begin to experience Him as the perfect Father and faithful friend.

Prayer then becomes something different. It is no longer a task to check off a list but time spent with Someone who loves us deeply.

2. Prayer Must Be a Priority

Healthy relationships require **intentional time**, and our relationship with God is no different.

Consider everyday relationships. A husband and wife may love each other deeply, but if they never take time to talk, the relationship suffers. Friendships also require effort and intentional connection.

The same principle applies to our relationship with God.

In Mark 1:35 we see the deliberate actions of Jesus:

- He rose early.
- He left the house.

- He went to a solitary place.
- He prayed.

Even in the middle of an incredibly busy ministry, Jesus prioritized time with the Father.

Why Prayer Is Often Difficult

Many Christians struggle to make prayer a priority for several reasons.

Busyness

Modern life is filled with responsibilities—work, school, children’s activities, meetings, and countless other commitments. Even good things can crowd out time with God.

For many families, life is organized around a packed calendar filled with events and obligations. While some of that busyness is unavoidable, it cannot become an excuse to neglect prayer.

After all, if anyone had a full schedule, it was Jesus. In the same passage we see Him preaching, teaching, healing the sick, and confronting demonic forces. Yet despite these demands, He still made time to pray.

Distractions

Another major obstacle is distraction—especially from technology. Many people attempt to pray with their phone nearby, only to be interrupted by constant notifications.

In those moments, it can feel as though we are telling God, “Hold on for a moment—I need to check this.”

Comfort and entertainment can also distract us. There is nothing wrong with relaxation, but sometimes we must intentionally step away from screens and entertainment to spend time with God.

Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline

Prayer is also difficult because it is a **spiritual discipline**. Like any habit, it requires practice and persistence.

Just as physical fitness requires consistent exercise, spiritual growth requires regular time with God. Developing a habit of prayer takes time, effort, and patience.

Spiritual Opposition

Finally, Scripture reminds us that prayer is difficult because **spiritual warfare is real**.

In Ephesians 6:12, the apostle Paul writes that believers are engaged in a struggle not against people but against spiritual forces of evil. In that same passage, Paul describes the armor of God and calls believers to remain alert in prayer.

Prayer is not merely a quiet religious practice. It is part of the spiritual battle believers face every day.

Because of this reality, prayer must be treated seriously and pursued intentionally.

3. Prayer Empowers Mission and Purpose

The third lesson we see from Jesus is that **prayer fuels mission**.

Jesus prayed in order to remain aligned with the Father's will and to be strengthened for the work ahead. Prayer sustained His ministry and directed His actions.

The 19th-century pastor J. C. Ryle once wrote:

"If anyone thought that he could afford to neglect prayer, it was our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet of no one do we read so much about prayer."

Ryle also observed:

"Prayer was the secret of His power. Prayer was the life of His ministry."

Jesus lived in complete dependence on the Father, and prayer was the expression of that dependence.

Prayerlessness, on the other hand, quietly communicates something dangerous: *"I've got this. I don't really need God."*

But the truth is we cannot follow Jesus faithfully on our own strength.

If we are going to:

- Resist temptation
- Grow in patience, love, and kindness
- Help others find and follow Jesus

we need strength beyond ourselves. That strength comes through dependence on God in prayer.

Prayer also becomes more meaningful when it is connected to God's mission. Many prayers remain shallow because they focus only on comfort or personal needs. While those prayers matter, prayer becomes more vibrant when it includes things like:

- Praying for people who do not yet know Jesus
- Seeking wisdom for important life decisions
- Asking God for strength to grow spiritually
- Praying for the spread of the gospel

Jesus' prayers were shaped by His mission, and the same should be true for us.

Three Practical Ways to Pray

Understanding the importance of prayer raises an important question: *How do we actually pray?*

Here are three simple and helpful approaches.

1. Simply Talk to God

The most basic approach to prayer is simply conversation.

Because God is our Father and friend, we can talk to Him openly throughout the day. Prayer does not need complicated words or special language. It is simply speaking honestly with God.

2. Use the ACTS Framework

For those who appreciate structure, the **ACTS model** provides a helpful guide:

Adoration – Begin by praising God for who He is. Reflect on His character, power, and goodness.

Confession – Honestly acknowledge sin and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing.

Thanksgiving – Express gratitude for God's blessings, both spiritual and practical.

Supplication – Present requests to God for your own needs and the needs of others.

This framework is not meant to be rigid, but it helps organize prayer and keep it balanced.

3. Pray Scripture

Another powerful method is to **turn Bible passages into prayers.**

Instead of struggling to find words, we can let God's Word guide our prayers.

For example, Philippians 4:6–7 encourages believers not to be anxious but to bring everything to God in prayer. A prayer based on that passage might sound like this:

“Father, I am feeling anxious about this situation. I bring my worries to You and thank You for Your faithfulness in the past. Help me trust You and experience the peace that only You can give.”

Similarly, 1 John 1:9 reminds us that if we confess our sins, God forgives and cleanses us. Turning that into prayer might look like:

“Lord, I confess this sin before You. Thank You that through Jesus I am forgiven and cleansed.”

Praying Scripture allows God's Word to shape both our thinking and our prayers.

Prayer Flows from the Gospel

As we consider these truths about prayer, it is important to remember one central point: *prayer is not about earning God's love.*

We do not pray to impress God or to prove our worth. We pray because, through Jesus Christ, we already have access to Him.

God understands our struggles. He knows how easily we become distracted and inconsistent. Yet He continually offers grace and invites us back into relationship.

Prayer is simply responding to that grace.